

18 June 1979

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 41Scoville, Herbert  
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# The SALT Debate: Why We Don't Need Iran

By Herbert Scoville Jr.

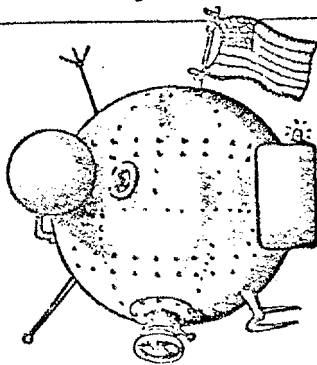
"...America doesn't need the detailed data once received from Iranian listening posts to verify SALT II. It's a phony issue..."

With President Carter and Soviet Leonid Brezhnev scheduled to sign the SALT II agreement this week in Vienna, the future of arms limitation will rest with the United States Senate. Constitutionally, the senators must ratify this accord, but, based on recent soundings, such approval is far from certain.

A key reason for this hesitancy stems from America's loss, during the January revolution which overthrew the shah, of United States "listening posts" in Iran. In congressional testimony, rhetorical outbursts, and editorials, opponents of SALT II have repeatedly said that without American intelligence monitoring facilities in Iran, there's simply no way the U.S. government can tell whether the Russians are abiding by the confines of SALT II. But the Iran question, as we shall see, is really a phony issue.

Verification—whether the United States can detect Soviet treaty violations—is the politicians' ideal issue in the SALT II treaty-ratification debate. While polls show that 80 percent of all Americans support arms-limitation agreements with the Soviet Union, the same polls demonstrate that 70 percent don't trust the Russians. Thus the verification issue lets a politician have it both ways. He can piously favor weapons controls while saying he is not satisfied that the treaty can be verified because he cannot trust the Russians when our survival is at stake.

But just what did America lose in Iran? Basically radar and electronic listening posts which, because they were



only 600 miles from the Soviet ICBM test-launch area at Tyuratam, could observe the early phases of Russian long-range missile firings. Once their missile rises above the horizon, America's radio receivers can record the signals—called telemetry—sent back from the test missile to the firing team on the ground. These signals give detailed information on the operation and performance of all missile components. This permits America to have the same data on the workings of Russian missiles as their Soviet designers.

This information on the rockets used to launch Soviet missiles was extremely useful in unraveling the details of the early Soviet missile program. I was charged with this task in my days at the CIA at a time when other sources were fragmentary and less developed than they are today. This data is still an important element of America's intelligence, as the United States seeks to learn all the details of new types of

Soviet missiles. But America doesn't have to have this detailed data to verify treaty compliance: The job can be done without it. Intelligence gathering is not synonymous with treaty verification; verification is a much more limited task. All the United States has to determine is whether a specific limitation is being observed or even whether the Russians are using concealment measures which impede verification. It is this crucial difference that explains the apparent discrepancy between CIA Director Stansfield Turner's testimony that it would take four years to replace our intelligence capabilities lost in Iran and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's assertion that we could verify the SALT II treaty from the day it was signed.

It's important to examine some key questions related to verifying treaty compliance where the bases in Iran might have been involved.

☐ Are the Soviets testing a missile with multiple warheads (MIRV's)?

☐ Are they putting more than the allowed number of warheads on a certain type missile?

☐ Are they testing more than the single allowed new ICBM?

☐ Is the missile launch weight or "throw weight" significantly greater than that of current models?

The Iranian stations provided supportive data for answering these questions, but America does have alternative redundant sources which ensure that the treaty can be verified today.

Few people perhaps realize that the "open skies" President Eisenhower sought in 1955 are now a *fait accompli* and that the Soviets have agreed to this principle in the SALT II treaties. They have even agreed that they will

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